

Message Text

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44-60

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 L-03 JUSE-00 PA-04 PRS-01 USIA-15 SAM-01

PM-07 SS-20 SY-10 INR-10 CIAE-00 NSC-10 DRC-01 RSC-01

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R 311025Z JAN 74

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 228

INFO SECDEF WASHDC

NSA FORT MEADE MD

7TH RRFS UDORN

AMCONSUL UDORN

COMUSMACTHAI

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 1717

SECDEF FOR OASD/PA

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD AND PAO

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI, TH

SUBJECT: NEW YORK TIMES PURSUIT OF ARMY SPECIALIST ON WATERGATE

LEAD

SUMMARY. TWO NEW YORK TIMES CORRESPONDENTS HAVE BEEN PURSUING
SSGT JOHN BURCH, ATTACHED TO CLASSIFIED ASA RADIO RESEARCH
STATION AT UDORN FOR PAST WEEK SEEKING STORY ON WATERGATE.
NEW YORK OFFICE HAD APPARENTLY TRACED SUSPECTED CONNECTION
WITH WHITE HOUSE ELECTRONIC INSTALLATIONS AND/OR SUSPECTED
TAMPERING WITH TAPES. BURCH HAS DENIED ANY KNOWLEDGE OF WATERGATE.
HE DID MAKE DIRECT STATEMENT TO NEWSMEN JAN 29 AT UDORN CONSULATE
AND PROVIDED REPLIES TO QUESTIONS JAN 31. TIMES REPORTERS HAVE
ALREADY FILED STORY ON ALLEGED RUN-AROUND TREATMENT AT UDORN.
END SUMMARY.

1. CORRESPONDENT JAMES CLARITY OF NEW YORK TIMES AT UDORN

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JAN 23 SOUGHT INTERVIEW WITH US ARMY STAFF SERGEANT JOHN

BURCH AT ASA SEVENTH RADIO RESEARCH FIELD STATION (RAMASUN STATION). TIMES ALLEGED BURCH WAS UNDER SUBPOENA IN CONNECTION WITH WATERGATE CASE AND HAD STORY TO TELL. BURCH INSISTED TO HIS SUPERIORS THAT THIS WAS CASE OF MISTAKEN IDENTITY, THAT HE AND HIS MOTHER HAD BEEN HARASSED PREVIOUSLY BY PRESS, AND THAT HE DID NOT WISH TO MEET THE NEWSMEN. AFTER THOROUGH COORDINATION WITH MAC THAI AND EMBASSY, CLARITY WAS INFORMED THROUGH AMCONSUL UDORN THAT BURCH HAD NO INFORMATION AND DID NOT WISH TO BE INTERVIEWED.

2. TUESDAY, JAN 29, CLARITY RETURNED TO THE CHASE, SUPPORTED BY JOSEPH LALYVELD, NYTIMES STAFFER BASED IN HONG KONG WHO HAD FISHED FOR INFORMATION ON BURCH AT EMBASSY JAN 25. PAIR TRACED BURCH TO HIS OFF-STATION QUARTERS IN UDORN, BUT HE EVADED ANSWERING QUESTIONS AND REPORTED TO RAMASUN STATION. FOLLOWING DISCUSSION WITH CONSUL, BURCH AGREED TO MEET NEWSMEN AT CONSULATE IN MID-AFTERNOON, WHEN HE SIMPLY STATED HIS NAME AND RANK, HIS LACK OF KNOWLEDGE, AND HIS REFUSAL TO BE INTERVIEWED. HIS NERVOUS MANNER ON BOTH ENCOUNTERS APPARENTLY ENCOURAGED TIMESMEN TO SUSPECT THAT HE HAD SOMETHING TO HIDE.

3. IN BANGKOK JAN 30 LELYVELD AND CLARITY TOLD CINCPAC PA/LNO THEY WERE WILLING TO FOREGO PERSONAL INTERVIEW IF THEY COULD OBTAIN ANSWERS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS.

QUESTIONS WERE STRAIGHTFORWARD AND BURCH'S RESPONSES, WHICH ARE SUPPORTED BY HIS PERSONNEL FILE, SUPPORT HIS ASSERTION THAT HE HAD NO CONNECTION WITH WATERGATE AFFAIR OR WHITE HOUSE.

4. FOLLOWING ARE Q'S AND A'S RELEASED TO NYTIMES IN BANGKOK AFTERNOON JAN 31. RELEASE WAS CLEARED BY RAMASUN COMMANDER WITH ASA.

A. WHERE HAS SGT BURCH BEEN POSTED IN THE LAST TWO YEARS ON PERMANENT ASSIGNMENT AND TDY WITH DATES?

A. FT. DEVENS, MASS., OCT 71 - JULY 72, LEAVE ENROUTE TO THAILAND JULY 72 - AUG 72, 29 AUG 72 - ARRIVED RAMASUN STATION, THAILAND.

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Q. WHEN DID HE ARRIVE IN THAILAND ON THIS ASSIGNMENT;

A. 29 AUGUST 1972.

Q. HAS HE EVER BEEN STATIONED AT FORT DEVENS IN MASS?
WHEN -- :INCLUDE TDY.

A. YES, AUG 64 - FEB 65; OCT 68 - AUG 69; 21 MAR 70 - 9

OR 19 JULY 70 (TDY); OCT 71 - JUL 72; 23 JUL 73 - 25 JUL 73
(ON LEAVE)

Q. IN THE PAST YEAR HAS HE BEEN IN WASH. D.C.; SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA OR FLORIDA? IN WHAT CONNECTION?

A. NO.

Q. HE SAYS HE HAS NO "WORKING KNOWLEDGE" OF WATERGATE? DOES HE HAVE HEARSAY KNOWLEDGE NOT INCLUDING WHAT HE MIGHT HAVE GOTTEN FROM MEDIA OF ANY KIND?

A. HE HAS NO KNOWLEDGE WHATEVER.

5. WE UNDERSTAND THAT TIMESMEN FILED STORY ON THEIR UDORN EXPERIENCES, BUT THEY ARE UNSURE WHETHER IT WILL BE USED. UNLESS TIMES EDITORS IN NEW YORK KNOW SOMETHING WE HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO UNCOVER ABOUT BURCH, WE WOULD EXPECT TODAY'S FACTUAL REPLIES WOULD END THIS PARTICULAR CHASE.

6. COMMENT: TIMES REPORTERS MADE NO EFFORT TO ENTER RAMASUN STATION AND GAVE NO INDICATION OF IMPROPER INTEREST IN THIS SENSITIVE RADIO RESEARCH FACILITY, ALTHOUGH THEY DID COMMENT INFORMALLY TO EMBOFF ON ITS HIGH VISIBILITY AND SUSPECTED INTELLIGENCE FUNCTIONS. WE ARE OF COURSE PARTICULARLY ANXIOUS TO AVOID ANY SENSATIONAL REPORTING ON US ACTIVITIES IN THAILAND WHICH MIGHT ATTRACT UNWANTED ATTENTION OR INFLAME THAI FEELINGS. ALTHOUGH WE MAY BE HOME FREE ON THIS CASE, WE WOULD APPRECIATE DISCREET INQUIRIES TO DETERMINE WHETHER BURCH IS LIKELY TO BE CONTINUED SUBJECT OF PRESS INTEREST, IN WHICH CASE IT MIGHT BE WISE TO TRANSFER HIM OUT OF THAILAND. END COMMENT.
KINTNER

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